



Create a Safe Environment for Employees and Customers

As businesses begin to reopen, health officials recommend employers and employees continue practicing the same precautions that have helped flatten the curve of COVID-19 cases in our community: social distancing; washing hands frequently; covering sneezes and coughs, disinfecting surfaces and wearing face coverings or masks when recommended. The Texas Department of State Health Services has [current guidance for non-essential businesses as they reopen](#).

As life slowly becomes more normal, there are still likely to be ongoing cases of COVID-19 in our community, so continued and increased testing is critical to prevent a resurgence of the virus. Testing is free and no symptoms are required: <https://covcheck.hctx.net/> or call 832-927-7575. COVID-19 is a very contagious respiratory illness that spreads from person to

person when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 and no medicine to treat the virus, only the symptoms. Symptoms include a dry cough, fever, shortness of breath, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and loss of taste or smell

While 80% of the people who contract COVID-19 have mild to moderate symptoms and fully recover, it can cause serious or fatal medical complications for older people, people with underlying health conditions or compromised immune systems. Some people who contract COVID-19 have no symptoms ([asymptomatic](#)), but can still spread the disease. Employers and employees working together can help prevent future cases of COVID-19 in the workplace and protect themselves and their customers.

Steps to Minimize the Risk of COVID-19 in the Workplace

Maintain a Healthy Environment for Employees and Customers

- Employees, customers and visitors should practice social distancing and stay 6 feet apart. For high-traffic employee areas or where customers will be in line, mark 6-foot distances on the floor to remind people.
- For businesses that will be reopening, employers should consider if they need to reconfigure or rebuild their existing space to ensure social distancing. Tele-work or staggering shifts can also provide additional space in workplaces to ensure social distancing.
- Practice proper hygiene: wash hands frequently, cover coughs and sneezes with tissues, avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- If employees are required to wear masks or face coverings, provide them and [instruct employees how to properly use and remove them](#) to avoid cross contamination.
- If customers will be using carts or baskets to shop, disinfect them after each use.

- When goods are delivered to customers' cars or mail to homes, the employee and customer should wash their hands after the delivery.
- Employees who have COVID-19 [symptoms](#) (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home or be sent home if they develop those symptoms at work.
- Some employees may be at [higher risk for serious illness](#), such as [older adults](#), those with chronic medical conditions and pregnant women. Consider minimizing face-to-face contact between these employees or assign work tasks that allow them to maintain a distance of six feet from other workers, customers and visitors, or to telework if possible.
- Employees who are well, but who have a sick family member at home with COVID-19, should notify their supervisor and follow [CDC recommended precautions](#).
- Sick employees should follow [CDC-recommended steps](#). Employees should not return to work until the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#) are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace, but maintain confidentiality of the infected employee as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Fellow employees should then self-monitor for [symptoms](#) (i.e., fever, cough, or shortness of breath).
- To prevent stigma and discrimination in the workplace, use only the guidance described above to determine risk of COVID-19 infection. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin.
- See [OSHA COVID-19](#) webpage for more information on how to protect workers from potential exposures and risk levels in different jobs.

Support health and hand hygiene for employees, customers, and worksite visitors:

- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles.
- Provide soap and water in the workplace. If soap and water are not readily available, provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol. If hands are visibly dirty, soap and water should be chosen over hand sanitizer. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained.
- Place hand sanitizers in multiple locations to encourage hand washing by employees and customers.
- Place posters that encourage [hand hygiene](#) to [help stop the spread](#) at the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.
- Discourage handshaking – encourage the use of other noncontact methods of greeting.
- Direct employees to visit the [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) and [clean hands webpage](#) for more information.

Perform routine environmental cleaning and disinfection:

- Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, keyboards, telephones, handrails, and doorknobs.
- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment when possible. If necessary, clean and disinfect them before and after use with disposable disinfecting wipes.
- For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available at [epa.gov](#). Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

Even as life slowly becomes more ‘normal’, there are likely to be ongoing cases of COVID-19 in our community.

- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- Perform enhanced cleaning and disinfection after people suspected/confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the facility. If a sick employee is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, [follow the CDC cleaning and disinfection recommendations](#).
- Install high-efficiency air filters.
- If possible, increase ventilation rates in the work environment.
- Install physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards

Employer Policies to Promote Employee Wellness

- Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of and understand these policies.
- Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or take care of children due to school and childcare closures. Additional flexibilities might include giving advances on future sick leave and allowing employees to donate sick leave to each other.
- Employers that do not currently offer sick leave to some or all of their employees may want to draft non-punitive “emergency sick leave” policies.
- Employers should not require a positive COVID-19 test result or a healthcare provider’s note for employees who are sick to validate their illness, qualify for sick leave, or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely manner.
- Review human resources policies to make sure that policies and practices are consistent with public health recommendations and are consistent with existing state and federal workplace laws (for more information on employer responsibilities, visit the [Department of Labor](#) and the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s](#) websites).
- Connect employees to employee assistance program (EAP) resources (if available) and community resources as needed. Employees may need additional social, behavioral, and other services, for example, to cope with the death of a loved one.

Maintain Healthy Business Operations

- Identify a workplace coordinator who will be responsible for COVID-19 issues and their impact on the workplace.
- Train employees on new procedures, such as curbside delivery, and additional hygiene practices and social distancing to protect themselves and customers.
- Plan for absenteeism if multiple employees become sick at the same time.
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent.
- If employees will be traveling out of the country, check the [CDC's Traveler's Health Notices](#) for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country they will travel to. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from countries with travel advisories, and information for aircrew, can be found on the [CDC website](#).
- If traveling within the US, be aware that some states may have their own travel restrictions, so check before you travel out of state.